

IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR VIETNAMESE TEACHERS: STUDIES ON SINGAPORE'S EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

The quality of a nation's education and human resources depend much on its teaching workforce. Hence, training a teacher with adequate competencies is playing a critical role for country's development. Recently, teacher's professional competencies and teacher's professional development have been receiving much attention. In seeking for orientation and innovations in teacher training process with the aim of developing professional competencies, studying and analyzing experiences from other countries can be seen as an important starting point. This paper presents the core competencies of Singaporean teachers, along with some analysis and evaluation for the Grad and in-service teacher competencies framework. Thereby, the authors would like to bring a reference point of view for the development of teacher professional standards in Vietnam, as well as for the training and retraining of teachers today and the next few years, especially for the education renovation after 2015.

KEYWORDS: Education, Teacher, Renovation & Development

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INTRODUCTION

Among the factors that ensure the quality of education and quality of human resources for the development of a country, the quality of its teachers has been considered as a key factor that plays a decisive role [1]. From theory to practice, from the East to the West, it is showed that the developments of the curriculum, textbooks, teaching conditions... are hard to promote the efficiency, or even useless, if the quality of teachers is weak or is not taken into account [3]. Thus, for many countries around the world, teachers and teacher quality appear in the education development strategies with great attention and to be considered as the key factor for the success of education and country development [6].

To achieve the above-mentioned ideas, besides incentives for teachers, investment in developing educational institutions, teacher training..., a system of standards for teaching profession, or teachers' competencies standards, needs to be developed [11]. In fact, teachers' competencies standards have been developed and completed in many countries, such as Singapore, Australia, United State ... It could be said that, for the first time after decades, by professional standards, teachers and educational institutions already have the basement for cultivating and expertise. This is a goal to strive for, a measure for managers and teachers to evaluate and self-evaluate. This also is a significant step forward in education science, in training and retraining of teachers.

In accordance with this trend, the professional standards for Vietnamese teachers in junior and senior schools has been developed and issued. However, in the 21st century landscape, education must focus on nurturing the whole child – morally, intellectually, physically, socially and aesthetically. Students need to acquire new

knowledge, skills and dispositions to ensure their survival and success as individuals, as members of the community, and as citizens of our nation [4]. To achieve this, we must develop teachers who are able to undertake greater responsibilities as they are at the forefront of educating our youth [5]. Hence, these professional standards for the teaching workforce need to be updated and adjusted. In order to do this, one of the basic strategies is to consult the educational results and achievements from developed countries, then to adapt to the education reform process, including teacher training and retraining, in our country.

Bearing these ideas in mind, we first present the core competencies of Singaporean teachers, then we analyze and discuss about the graduand teacher competencies framework issued by National Institute of Education (NIE), a university-based teacher education institution in Singapore. Thereby, we would like to bring a reference point of view for the development of teacher professional standards in Vietnam, as well as for the training and retraining of teachers today and the next few years, especially for the education renovation after 2015.

RESULTS

Teaching is a highly-respected profession in Singapore, not only because the Confucian culture to value teachers, but also because government's policies to teachers. In Singapore, NIE is not only in charge of training teacher, they are also committed to guarantee the quality of national teaching workforce. In NIE's framework, following demands/standards are needed for a graduand teacher [2]:

- NIE believes that a graduand teacher should have belief in pupil's learning abilities; he/she should take care and concern to all pupils. In NIE's framework, a graduand teacher should be able to: (i) develop a culture of care, trust and friendliness that enhances pupils' well-being and character development; (ii) determine pupils' needs and expectations by a variety of methods, thus provides necessary guidance and support; (iii) encourages practices that support the physical, emotional and social well-being of pupils; (iv) has high expectations of all pupils, respects their variety backgrounds, and is committed to their development as learners. Moreover, a NIE graduand teacher should have communication skills to effectively interact with pupils and parents. He/she is also believed to be able to identify pupils' learning problems and thus assist them effectively.
- In teaching and learning side, a graduand teacher should have integrated understanding of how pupils learn, and thus, be able to develop and provide learning opportunities that support pupils' development. He/she is believed to be organized and self-managing in relation to time, planning, resources, attention and relationships. Additionally, he/she should be able to: (i) create instructional opportunities that suitable to diverse learners; (ii) use a variety of instructional strategies for pupils' learning; (iii) engage pupils in problem-solving, thus, develop pupils' critical thinking and creative thinking abilities; (iv) plan, develops and delivers IT-integrated and multi-media supported learning experiences to help pupils engage in learning actively.

In class management side, a NIE graduand teacher is able to (i) create and maintain an effective classroom environment that encourages pupils' positive social interaction, self-motivation and active engagement in purposeful learning; (ii) manage the resources of time, space, activities, and attention to engage pupils in productive tasks; (iii) proactively plans to maintain discipline in classroom; (iv) facilitate pupils' acquisition of management skills and help them to cope with difficulties in their learning.

In monitoring and assessing side, a graduand teacher should have knowledge about the connection between the purpose of assessment and the intended learning outcomes. He/she is expected to be able to comprehend that assessment is closely tied to the teaching learning activities and pupils' motivation and performance. He/she should be able to use a range of appropriate assessment strategies to identify learner's needs, to evaluate learner's progress, thus, to provide evaluative feedback and to take follow-up actions.

- Graduand teachers are expected to be aware of the opportunity to use CCA to inculcate desirable values and attitudes, and to support the holistic development of pupils. Particularly, a teacher should be committed to supporting CCA activities. He/she should be able to use CCA as means of conveyance opportunities for pupils to maximize their potential. He/she should be aware of the need to manage pupil behavior in CCA activities, as well as basic safety procedures and considerations during activities.
- NIE graduand teachers are expected to cultivate their knowledge with subject mastery, reflective thinking, analytic thinking, initiative, creative teaching and future focus. In terms of subject mastery, teachers are expected to show their strong working knowledge of subject matter and related educational issues, and seeks to deepen his/her understanding of the subject area and teaching practices. In terms of reflective thinking, a graduand teacher is able to adopt a critically reflective stance towards his/her own professional practice as a basis for ongoing monitoring and refinement of those practices, including the identification of strengths and areas for improvement. In terms of analytic thinking, NIE requires the teacher to demonstrate a capacity to engage with problems. Such as, he/she is able to identify possible cause-and-effect relationships, develops plans to respond, prioritizes tasks in order of importance, and carefully monitors responses; makes and defends complex choices and decisions... Teachers are able to seek opportunities to take initiative to improve professional practices. They are also expected to explore the use of creative teaching techniques/strategies to cater for pupils with different abilities, as well as to be aware of the need to develop 21st century skills and values in their pupils.
- A graduand teacher needs to be aware of the rationale for national education policies and practices and their infusion. He/she has critical awareness of the norms and values inherent in the Singapore system of education; understands the Desired Outcomes of Education; and is aware of the role of school rules, and is committed to understanding and abiding by the operating procedures and organization structure of the school to which he/she is appointed. Moreover, graduand teacher is expected to take initiative to support peers and colleagues.
- The teacher is aware of the need to build collaboration and partnership with parents to maximize the learning of pupils; uses strategies to keep parents informed on the progress of pupils and school activities; and values perspectives of parents. He/she is able to actively seek out opportunities for professional collaboration within and beyond the school; cooperates with and supports colleagues; shares information and good ideas; expresses positive expectations of others; and speaks positively of team members.
- The teacher takes care to monitor his/her emotional and professional self in order to identify immediate support and/or developmental needs; and to achieve work-life balance, and seeks guidance where necessary. He/she should be aware of the need for professionalism in all aspects of his/her demeanor; the legal responsibilities and the need to maintain high standards of professional integrity when discharging his/her duties and responsibilities. A graduand teacher is also expected to be committed to National Education, and to valuing diversity in all its

forms. He/she should be able to demonstrate sensitivity to cultural and religious differences. In terms of resilience and adaptability, the teacher is tough in spirit, able to persevere in times of challenge, keeping a positive disposition; stays the course though there may be obstacles to surmount (he/she is optimistic); is able to think on his/her feet and make decisions appropriate to the situation at hand; and encourages and teaches her/his pupils to be resilient and adaptable.

DISCUSSIONS

The Graduand Teacher Competencies (GTC) Framework articulates a set of professional standards, benchmarks and goals for NIE graduands. As a holistic integration and alignment of the Values Skills and Knowledge Model (V3SK) and the MOE competencies framework for beginning teachers, GTC Framework includes three performance dimensions of teaching profession standards, which are professional practice, leadership & management and personal effectiveness [8]. Each performance dimension is presented in more details by its components, and then each component is concretized by its particular standards, which can be used to facilitate teacher training and retraining process, as well as expertise and assessing teachers. The GTC Framework also provides clear expectations for stakeholders in terms of the competencies of NIE graduands [1].

By the GTC Framework, NIE has shown very clearly the requirements of fostering and self-fostering to develop teacher's career, besides teaching and nurturing competencies [9]. On one hand, they emphasize "legal responsibility and the need to maintain high standards of professional integrity" when teachers perform their works and take their responsibility; on the other hand, they also require teachers to be able to "seek for opportunities to improve professional initiative" as well as "awareness of the value and necessity of the skills needed for innovation and entrepreneurship" [10]. Always concern about the nation education system, they specially emphasize "the need to develop the skills for the 21st century" and the need to be aware that "in a world of rapidly change, the ability to test and criticism new strategies could be the focus of professional competencies". These issues have been posed specifically and have been updated in this GTC Framework by NIE.

The GTC Framework have shown positive educational ideology of Singapore education system. This not only is reflected in the advanced teaching techniques equipped to each teacher, but also presented in the construction of "a culture of care, trust and friendly", in the attitude of "respecting the diversity of knowledge", and in skills of "listening and take care of students in interaction with them".

Singaporean do not turn their education system into a business or commercial services, but they take the positive elements of the law of the market economy to their education system and promote it moving forward [7]. This is reflected in their concept and discoursing about a professional competency which is the ability to "provide quality learning of child". Here, the teacher, as the representative of the country and the education system, bring "high-quality public services" to students, help students to create "best learning products" for themselves.

The GTC Framework has shown very clearly fundamental competencies of human beings in the 21st century, that is: understanding, sympathising, problem solving, cooperative, ICT,... This reveals that the updates to the teaching profession standards of Singaporean education system have met the requirements for education development in the new era.

CONCLUSIONS

The GTC Framework reveals requirements and standards for a potential candidate to become a teacher in Singapore. This framework is an useful reference for Vietnam on the journey of developing and completing our teaching profession standards. It is also an intellectual perspective that should be considered and studied by Vietnam education institutions in order to to improve the quality of teacher training in the new social context.

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